

PART IV

The Pattern of Agriculture

Farms: Number and Size

The number of farms has been decreasing in Asotin County while the average size has been increasing slightly since 1920. Farms numbered 453 in 1954 compared with 615 in 1945 and 578 in 1920. Although the total land in farms has been declining slightly in recent years, the smaller number of farms has caused the average size to increase from 448 acres in 1920 to 630 acres in 1954. This is well above the state average of 270 acres per farm and Asotin ranks twelfth among Washington counties in the average size of farm. The 1954 Census showed 98 farms in the county with 1,000 acres or more per farm and these units contained over 87 percent of the total land in farms.

Total area in farms increased from 148,649 acres in 1900 to a peak of 352,279 acres in 1945. Since World War II the total acreage in farms has been declining. The increased average size of farm in Asotin County is caused in part by the purchasing or leasing of smaller farms and consolidating them with larger units. Successful livestock and grain farmers have added more land in order to increase their total returns. Some state public lands and railroad

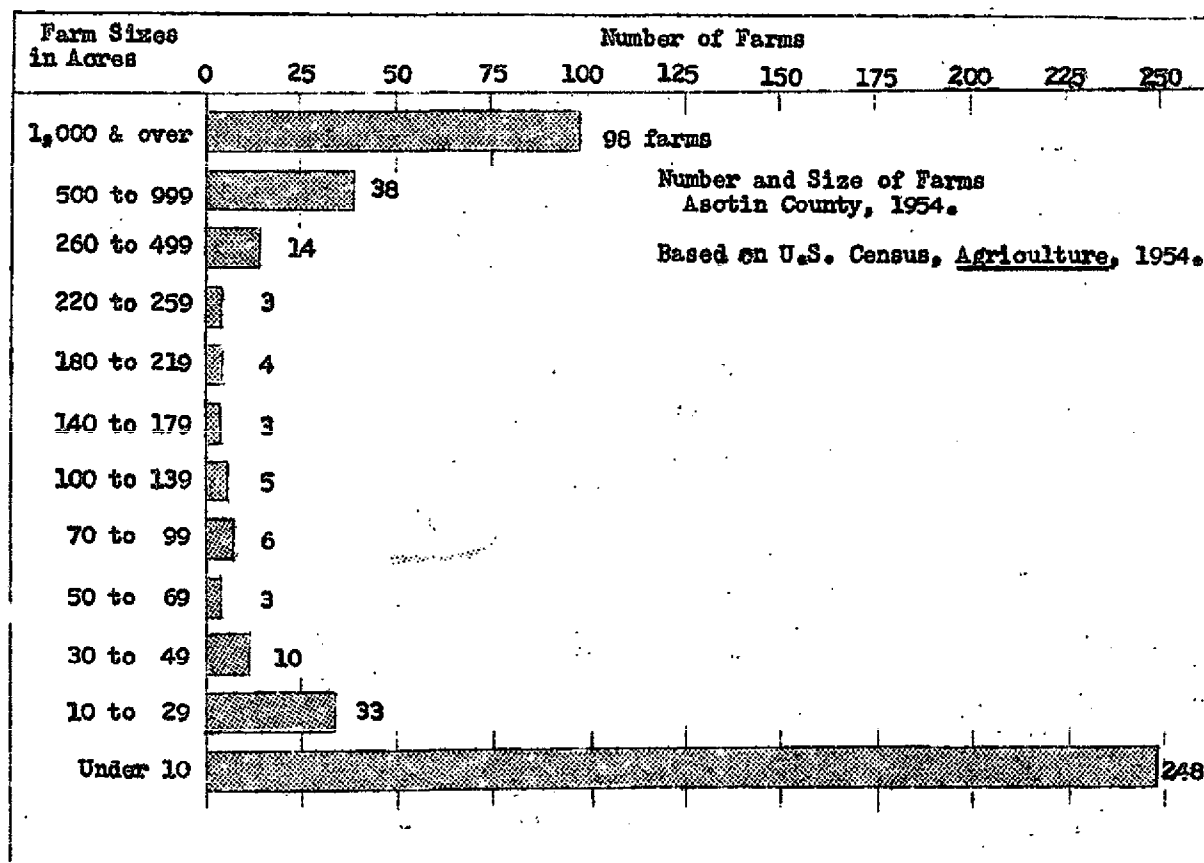


Figure 8.- Number and Size of Asotin County Farms, 1954.

lands have been leased for crops or grazing.

Table 9.- Farms, Number and Average Size, Land in Farms
Asotin County, 1900-1954

Census Year	Total Farms in County	Total County area in farms (acres)	Average size of farms in the county (acres)	Percent of County area in farms
1900	533	128,649	241.4	32.1
1910	555	189,987	342.3	47.3
1920	578	259,233	448.5	64.6
1925	534	230,593	431.8	57.5
1930	622	279,253	449.0	69.6
1940	542	329,367	607.7	82.1
1945	615	352,279	572.8	87.8
1950	469	330,216	704.1	82.3
1954	453	292,813	629.7	73.0

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Asotin County is an area of both small and large size farms. In 1954 sixty percent of the farms were under 30 acres while nearly thirty percent of the farms averaged 500 acres or more. Tree fruits, nuts, grapes and a limited amount of poultry are produced on smaller farms whereas grain and livestock are produced on large farms.

Table 10.- Large Farms: Number and General Land Use
Asotin County, 1954

Land Utilization on Large Farms	Farms 1,000 to 4,999 acres	Farms 5,000 acres and over
Number of farms-----	88 farms	10 farms
Land in farms-----	190,365 acres	65,229 acres
Cropland harvested-----	33,323 acres	4,685 acres
Cropland used only for pasture--	1,622 acres	44 acres
Cropland not harvested and not pastured (idle, fallow land)---	25,718 acres	3,600 acres
Woodland pastured-----	21,056 acres	13,629 acres
Woodland not pastured-----	1,253 acres	--
Other pasture (not cropland and not woodland)-----	104,670 acres	43,143 acres

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Types of Farms

Miscellaneous and unclassified farms are the most common type, making up 48 percent of all farms in Asotin County. Field-crop farms growing wheat, barley and oats made up 22 percent and are the most common type of special

farms. Fruit farms (71) and livestock farms other than dairy and poultry (45) were the next most important type of farms.

Table 11.- Types of Farms, Asotin County, 1954

Type of Farms	Number of Farms	Percent of all farms in the county
Total farms in county.....	453	
Field-crop farms.....	98	
Cash-grain.....	98	21.7
Other field-crop.....	0	
Vegetable farms.....	0	
Fruit-and-nut farms.....	71	15.7
Dairy farms.....	10	2.2
Poultry farms.....	5	1.1
Livestock farms other than dairy and poultry	45	9.9
General farms.....	7	
Primarily crop.....	0	
Primarily livestock.....	0	
Crop and livestock.....	7	1.5
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms.....	217	47.9

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Farm Values

Farm land and farm buildings have greatly increased in value since the low period in 1940. The value per acre in 1954 was over three times greater than the 1940 figure while per farm values also were three times greater than the 1940 average. An average farm was valued at about \$28,340 in 1954 compared with a value of about \$8,635 in 1940. Value has been added by the general rise in land prices, farm improvements and additions of farm land, machinery and building in the last 15 years.

Table 12.- Value of Farm Property
Asotin County, 1920-1954

Year	Total Value All Farm Property in County	County Average Values	
		Per Farm (dollars)	Per Acre (dollars)
1920	\$11,952,585	\$17,500	\$39
1930	7,693,664	12,370	28
1940	4,679,465	8,630	14
1950	11,439,848	24,390	38
1954	13,035,345	28,340	45

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Farm Tenure

A large majority of the farm operators (330 out of 453) own and fully operate their farms. Many farms have remained in ownership of the pioneer

families who established them and even today about 71 percent of Asotin farms are fully owned and owner-operated. Part-ownership of farms has gained in recent years. In part-ownership farmers own some of their farmland and rent or lease land in addition. Some of this is the result of the desire of elderly people to maintain ownership of land they do not wish to operate. Farm tenure, where a party rents and occupies an entire farm from an absentee owner, is not common in Asotin County. Only a small minority do not reside on the farms they are operating. In 1954 only 14 families lived elsewhere than on the farm they operated.

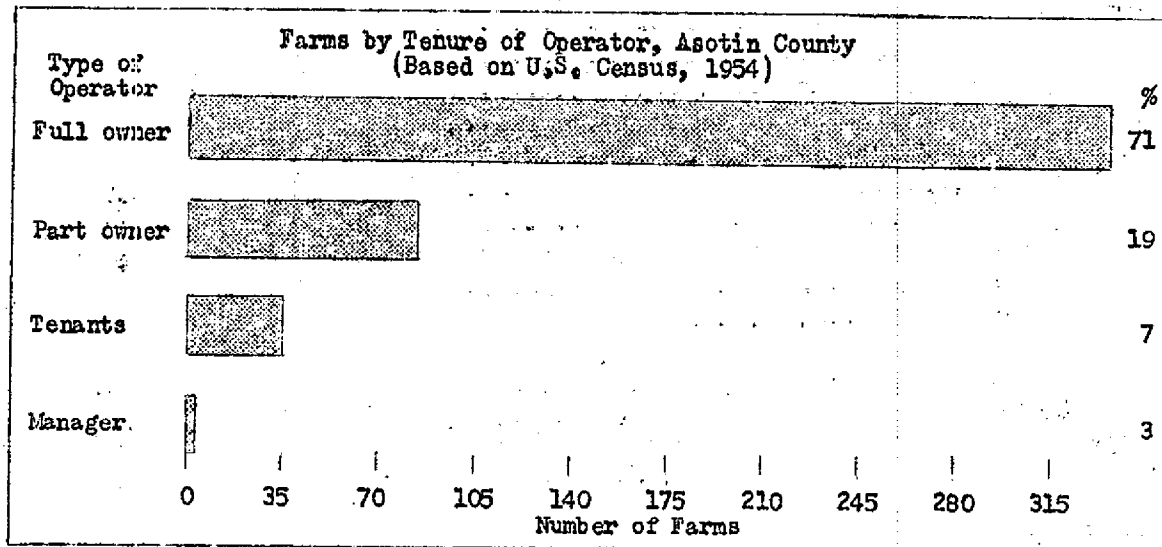


Figure 9 .- Farms by Tenure of Operator, Asotin County, 1954

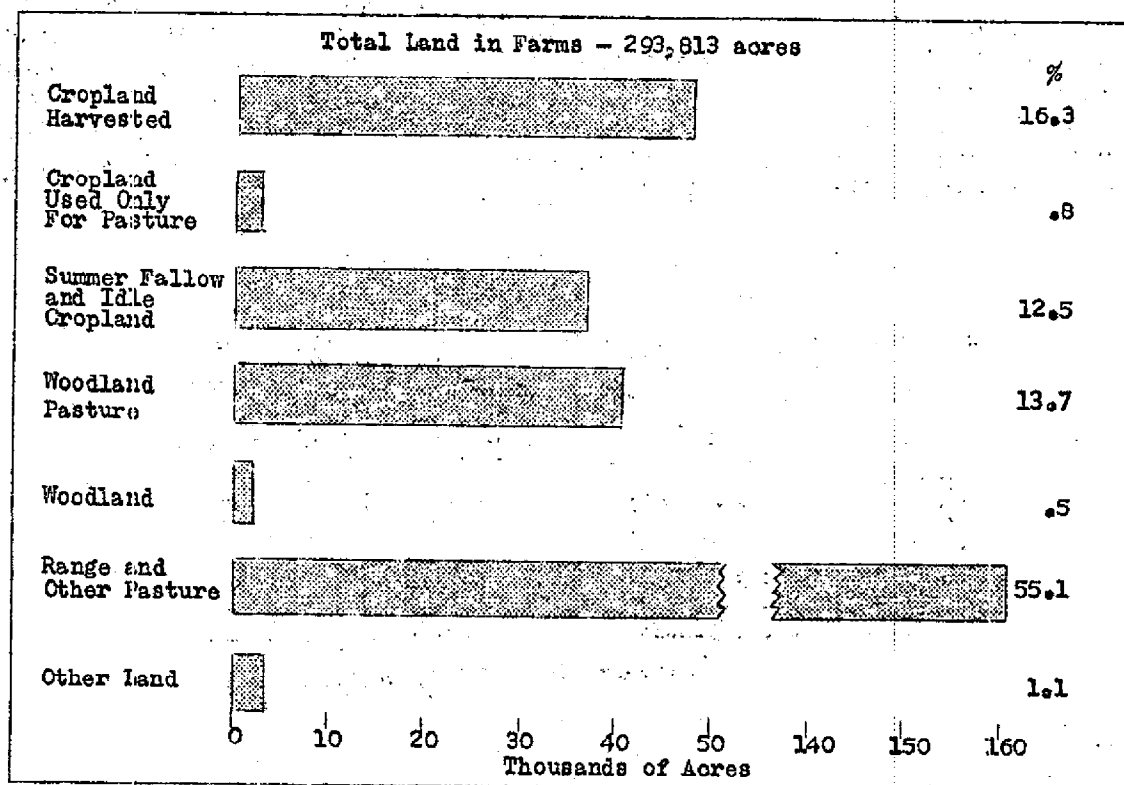


Figure 10.- Utilization of Farmland in Asotin County, 1954

Farmland Utilization

In 1954 over 55 percent of the land in farms was in range land and another 14 percent was in woodland pasture. Harvested cropland growing grain, hay and fruit accounted for only 16 percent of farmland. Mountainous and hilly topography compels most farms to use the major part of their holdings for range pastures and woodland. Nature of terrain limits the amount of land capable of being used for harvested crops employing modern machinery.

Farm Facilities

In 1954 Asotin County farm homes and farm operations were much better equipped with household conveniences and labor-saving devices than in earlier Census periods. Rural electrification is now well advanced with over 94 percent of all farms being serviced with electrical power. Telephones are now used by over 78 percent of all farms. Farmers have increased investments in labor-saving machinery and in motor trucks. About 76 percent of all farms had tractors and trucks and over 78 percent had automobiles in 1954. This agricultural region is above the national and state averages in use of household and farming equipment.

Table 13.- Specified Facilities and Equipment on Farms
Asotin County, 1954

Facility or Equipment Item	Number of Farms Using	Percent of All Farms in County Equipped
Telephone.....	364	78.3
Electricity.....	438	94.2
Television set.....	63	13.5
Piped running water.....	438	94.2
Home freezer.....	199	42.8
Electric pig brooder.....	10	2.2
Power feed grinder.....	52	11.2
Milking machine.....	28	6.0
Grain combines.....	105	22.6
Corn pickers.....	1	.2
Pick-up balers.....	28	6.0
Field forage harvesters.....	2	.4
Artificial ponds, reservoirs and earth tanks.....	62	13.3
Motortrucks.....	356	76.6
Tractors.....	353	75.9
Automobiles.....	365	78.5

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Farm Residence and Operation

Part-time farming is common in Asotin County. About 45 percent of the farm operators earn wages in work off their farms. In 1954 there were 239 farmers out of a total of 453 reporting full time or seasonal employment off their farms. There were 208 farmers who earned more from outside work than

they did from sales of products off their farms. Logging and lumbering in the Blue Mountain region and in the Lewiston, Idaho district is a leading source of wages.

Irrigation and Facilities

Asotin County had only 2,035 acres of land under irrigation in 1954. Irrigation is primarily private systems of pumps and sprinklers used by 313 farms. In recent years more farms have acquired irrigation facilities for increasing yields of pastures and field crops. About 1,300 acres of crops were irrigated in 1954 with 735 acres of pasture irrigated with sprinklers.

Table 14.- Asotin's County Rank Compared With
Other Washington Counties

Item Compared	Rank	Quantity	Year
<u>General</u>			
Land area.....	35	401,280 acres	1954
Number of farms.....	30	453 farms	1954
Land in farms--percent.....	9	73.0 percent	1954
Average size of farms.....	12	630 acres	1954
Cropland harvested.....	21	47,588 acres	1954
Rural farm population.....	36	1,175 persons	1950
Total county population.....	30	12,000 persons	1955
<u>Cash farm income</u>			
Value of all farm products sold....	27	2,966,889 dollars	1954
Value of livestock sold.....	28	793,613 dollars	1954
Value of crops sold.....	23	2,136,105 dollars	1954
<u>Livestock on farms</u>			
All cattle and calves.....	26	14,000 head	1954
Milk cows.....	33	745 head	1954
Hogs.....	24	1,400 head	1954
Chickens.....	33	15,758 birds	1954
Horses and mules.....	23	615 head	1954
Sheep and lambs.....	20	1,733 head	1954
<u>Dairy and poultry products sold</u>			
Value of dairy products sold.....	31	103,110 dollars	1954
Whole milk sold.....	32	1,653,000 pounds	1954
Value of poultry products sold....	33	59,068 dollars	1954
Chickens sold.....	34	6,121 birds	1954
Eggs sold.....	31	104,509 dozen	1954
<u>Important crops harvested</u>			
Wheat.....	13	31,500 acres	1954
Barley.....	13	9,400 acres	1954
Oats.....	23	1,211 acres	1954
Fruits.....	12	644 acres	1954

Sources: U. S. Census, Agriculture, 1954.

U. S. Census, Population, 1950.

Washington State Census Board

Estimate 1955.